



Left Your Children Echoing



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Chapter 1 by Jack Road

The ground is covered in snow, it is mid winter and everything in sight is dead from the cold. The cold crisp air rips at the lungs of whatsoever would breathe it in. A young woman with long, dark brown hair stands in the middle of a deserted field. Her head is tilted up and her eyes are closed. Her breath forms softly from her nostrils. Upon her shoulders hangs a heavy bear cloak and her fragile body is wrapped in a tight leather dress. Her dark boots are hidden in the deep snow. With a slight jerk of her head she reacts to the snapping of the dead branches at the edge of the field where the forest meets the fence posts. She searches with urgency to see what had made the sound.

The first blade is upon her before she can blink. A lethal three foot long blade of ice whistles past her ear and rebounds against an invisible wall of air, shattering into a hundred thousand pieces that go ricocheting tangentially into the air. A hundred more follow, the scream of them echoing in the wind. Yttior can hear cursing in the forest. They didn't expect her to be prepared, they had not thought she would have time to build wards. She hoped desperately that they believed she was still warded. A broken vial was still clenched in her hand, the shards cutting deep into her palm and drawing blood. She had not had time to build wards. She had used her

last protection. An Actuality of the Betrayed. She stared at it.

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She thought about how difficult it was to make that potion. The key ingredient was the betrayal of something that you once trusted. It had been a long time since she had befriended her while she was studying at the Shrine of Grusonnet. It had been picked out of the woods one day and stolen the duck she had on the fire. It had taken a great deal of time to earn the trust of that creature.

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Everyday she would place food out for it to eat, each day moving it closer and closer to where she sat mediating. Finally after many moons, it would eat out of her hand, and it would allow her to pet it.

The last day she was at the shrine it approached as usual, she reached out to it. She could see the fear in its eyes as she reached for it, she changed her grip as if to pet it, and it approached relieved. The sound of its neck breaking was bound to her mind. And now its sacrifice was wasted on these verdiløs igler. Her mana source was normally (ze) fear (ta) cruelty (tu) cowardice (vi) despair but now briefly it was (la) anger (vo) shame (da) guilt (vu) grief. And she was filled with them. She seized them, anything to survive. She waited, listening.

A thousand warriors erupted out of the forest towards her, spears at ready. Through (om) rationality threaded (la) anger. These apparitions were only as powerful as her mind allowed. Metres from her they vanished as quickly as they arrived. Om-Vu-La, the forest must be removed to drive out fox wasters. A great scythe a thousand metres long appeared and swung true, trees fell and became nothing, removed from the threads of time. Five figures stood peering at her. Om-Vo-Da, no one could see her sins, she vanished. Five figures stood looking around with alarm. Billions of shadow hornets poured into the field, searching to fill every portion, stingers filled with death. Om-Vu-Om-Vu-Om-Vu, her grief was undoing and her undoing was formless, she became an absence of space. Om-La, she was so present, she was amongst the five. Om-La-Om-La-Om-Da, her anger was the heat of the sun and the sun was forgiving the earth with a kiss.

Silent she stood among the burning bodies of her enemies. Snow was falling heavy now, but near above her the heat of the sun was melting all. Rain poured down on her, drenching her and dowsing the flaming corpses. The forest was angry and hurting, she could feel it writhing. She had removed a hundred tree souls from the timeline, the forest was having a stroke. The Green Ones would not be happy about this, it would take two hundred years at least to soothe the forest. But she couldn't worry about that now. There were only four bodies. One of them had escaped.

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